

Advantage, working mothers ^[1]

Author: Gullie, Cathy

Source: Macleans

Format: Article

Publication Date: 22 Dec 2011

EXCERPTS:

The Clash's hit *Should I Stay or Should I Go?* was written in 1981, but it could serve as the anthem of mothers through the ages grappling with the eternal question of whether they and their children are better off with them returning to work or remaining at home. It ranks among the most polarizing and personal of choices-and everyone thinks their decision is best. And often, they have studies to prove it.

Witness the latest evidence for re-entering the labour force post-baby: researchers at the department of human development and family studies at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro compared non-employed mothers to those working full- and part-time, and the effects on maternal health, couple intimacy, work-family conflicts, housework and child care. The article, in the latest *Journal of Family Psychology*, found that in most cases, employed moms are at an advantage. "Work offers mothers some pretty important opportunities and resources that may promote parenting and a sense of well-being," says co-author Cheryl Buehler. "It minimizes social isolation, and helps develop and refine skills like problem-solving, dealing with diverse sets of people and working as a team." Those abilities lend themselves to motherhood, explains Buehler, because they "provide children with the kinds of environments and experiences that they need to do well in the world."

The findings will, no doubt, further fuel the seemingly never-ending mommy-wars debate, a subject that has inspired countless books and blogs that perpetuate angst over parental choice.

...

Still, all three groups of mothers reported doing the majority of housework and child care rather than their partners, although those who worked full-time did the lowest proportion. There was another unifying theme: no matter what their work status, all groups of mothers reported a similar level of couple intimacy, suggesting that as maternal employment becomes more common, partners are finding it less of an obstacle to staying connected, says Buehler.

And no matter why a mother reported working full- or part-time-whether it was born out of financial necessity or a desire for personal fulfillment-Buehler says that the benefits were the same. That tells her that a significant shift in societal thinking is required going forward: "We need to think that part of being a mother involves an economic role, which actually enhances our capacity to be mothers rather than taking away from it," says Buehler. "So for [working] moms who are feeling harried or guilty or concerned"-and there are many among us-they must "realize that on average and over time, this is helping the family." And hopefully them too.

- reprinted from Macleans

Related link: Mothers' part-time employment: Associations with mother and family well-being ^[2]

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: work/life balance ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/01/advantage-working-mothers>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/01/advantage-working-mothers> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/12/01/mothers-part-time-employment-associations-mother-and-family> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/5668>